CHAPTER – V
EMERGING ISSUES IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

I – Introduction:

The earlier chapters had dealt with describing and analyzing historical approaches, current scenario in terms of policies programme etc. Administrative system and Management system of rural development in India in general and in Gujarat in particular has been discussed. This chapter is an attempt to specify the issues and challenges of Rural Development. Out of the above chapters, this attempt will facilitate the process of understanding how the Information Right may help to eliminate these kind of problems leading to better performance of Rural Development.

II- Policy and Planning Level Issues:

1. Union and State laws are not reviewed and suitably amended in accordance with the 73rd constitutional amendment. And even if the acts are amended there are dual approaches of implementation wherein the people are suppose to plan for their own affairs but on other hand there are specific guidelines which indicates detailed outline of planning which makes the planning exercise mechanical and left nothing to be decided by the people in the real sense, the constitutionally recognized bodies have just to pass the readymade resolutions given in prescribed performa.

2. Lack of Linkages among Components is a major policy level issue of rural development policy. For e.g. a key element for sustainable project outcomes is a design that is based on a holistic consideration of
livelihoods systems, needs and opportunities but narrow, sector-focused interventions proves to be a risk to sustainability in a variety of ways. Gains made in household food security can easily be lost due to disease outbreaks or adult mortality. Improved economic status can be compromised by shocks – natural or man-made – that deplete household assets and destroy community assets. In short, if households and communities lack resilience in the face of natural, social or economic shocks, project impacts can quickly be lost.

3. There are several Interventions which are technically inappropriate, culturally insensitive and institutionally ineffective which are likely to be failed. Many a times a policy itself is technically inappropriate for e.g. the activity of cattle farming is offered to SHG in desert area it is said technically not suitable. Sometimes culturally unacceptable activity is offered to a group is likely to be failed.

4. The programmes (guidelines of the programmes) are not flexible enough to be amended during implementation period. Sometimes it is found at state level or at district level that a particular clause is hindrance in smooth implementation of a program but since the guideline is prepared at certain level there is no scope left out to amend or improve the particular clause of it. Monitoring is so long-term that it provides "too little too late" in terms of useful course correction

5. The programe planning "handed down" by experts is counter-productive to mobilizing effective leadership and management.

6. Plan laid out in a step-by-step fashion cannot possibly allow for the flexibility required to overcome the complex challenges of human development.
7. Poor Backward and forward linkages results in least avenues for sustainability. Several policies are prepared in isolation without any provision of sustaining the occurrence of development. In such cases development occurs but fails to get replicated and even fails to get sustained.

8. The conventional approach to planning, with its rigid time frames, its breakdown of planning tasks into sectors and regions, and its centralized and technocratic perspective on plan formulation and implementation, is most unlikely to be effective in an increasingly turbulent environment.

9. A series of goals and a plan of action (or "blueprint") are created by experts and officials; People are expected to implement the plan; and Outcomes are reviewed periodically, typically once a year, to ensure adherence to the plan It breaks down in the face of enormous "real-world" challenges People become alienated because they feel that they have had no say in planning It does not take proper account of local or changing conditions

III- Management Related Issues:

1. Poor Strategy for Institutional Development and Partnership. For the success of any program Institutional development is very important component wherein institutions who are engaged in implementation are equipped with all required resources including manpower, financial, technical knowhow, sensitivity and preparedness. Poor institutions always give poor results. One of the other major management level functions is to do partnership with organizations, groups and institutions which is to be done in a very strategic way as this can be proved to be the accelerating component. But improper partnerships result in overlapping, delays, wastages and conflicts.
2. Impractical formats of Reporting. Formats are meant to monitor the adherence of the program at each and every stage of a program implementation but making it impractical leads to overlapping of work as well as unfruitful data collection. Many a times hectic data collection in terms of progress is rather a more lengthy process than that of development process itself. In such cases the implementing agencies devote their 75% time and energy in filling the formats of what that did under those 25% efforts.

3. Rural development projects are extremely dependent on their political, economic, socio-cultural, and natural environments, which are typically in a state of flux and uncertainty.

4. Rural development project activities are highly dependent for their successful performance on integration, or the coordination of a set of mutually complementary, interdependent activities. For example, the success of a credit activity may be dependent on the availability of an improved agronomic package, or the success of a rural road may be dependent on the existence of agricultural marketing opportunities. So if any single link is missing there is a problem. This is one of the major issues of rural development policy planning.

5. Public bureaucracies as implementers of rural development projects have certain well-known disadvantages. For example, government bureaucratic processes and regulations (checks and balances) make flexible decision-making and action in response to changing circumstances difficult. Red tape and corruption may reduce efficiency. Moreover, low civil service salaries make it difficult to attract and keep high-quality management and technical staff.
6. Projects with multi sectoral components implemented by a lead department have had considerable difficulty achieving the required coordination with other compartmentalized departments. For e.g. DRDA is implementing agency for SGSY but the projects under SGSY are to be prepared in consultation and coordination of departments like Forest, Roads and Building, Women and Child Development Department, Livelihood Corporation, Women’s economic Development Corporation, Water and Sanitation, Education, Banks etc. The line departments have their own basic mandatory functions for which they give propriety and consider such collaboration and support as voluntary or to say optional low priority nature kind of work. In short they are not answerable to anyone especially their role in SGSY.

7. There are laid down rules and procedures for every aspect of the government’s functioning and its interaction with the common man but, due to weaknesses of the bureaucracy, growing complexities of administration and absence of commitment and responsiveness, a wide gap has emerged between “Government” and “Governance”. People are not aware about their rights, duties, roles, benefits, remedies, grievance redressal mechanism, decision making system, responsible and questionable authorities with regard to a particular scheme in general and rural development affairs in particular.

8. Capacity Building of Stakeholders in terms of developing knowledge, skills and attitudes required for the success of a program. The component of capacity building is a missing or inadequate link of most of the rural development programs since the stakeholders are not being equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes required for a successful implementation of a programme.
9. The performance and qualitative changes are not being evaluated prior to commencement of further work.

10. Grant Flows are irregular. Financial management is one of the integral part of rural development management but the flow of grant is irregular which is a major management level issue of rural development.

11. Exit/Sustainability Strategy is one of the major elements of management of rural development management and administration but several rural development programmes are managed in isolation without integrating it with the future of occurred event.

12. Many a times the Implementation cost is higher than the cost of actual benefit given to poor or the beneficiary. Except in some exceptional cases such situation indicates the poor management system.

**IV - Implementation Level Issues:**

1. Selection of wrong set of beneficiaries is a major problem where real poor or to say the deserving beneficiaries are not selected but the different set of beneficiaries are selected. Although the prescribed method of beneficiary selection i.e. the method and criterion mentioned in the guidelines is correct but in practice different method is being practiced.

2. Selection of beneficiaries within communities was largely outside of the project’s control. This is a condition where the guidelines are not violated but the real beneficiaries are not selected. For example if the scheme is meant for schedule caste hence as per the criteria the beneficiaries should be from schedule caste but here within schedule caste there elite class and most of the beneficiaries are being selected from this elite class of schedule caste.
3. The programmes are least understood even amongst the stakeholders who are going to implement the program.

4. The programmes are least understood amongst the beneficiaries.

5. The real objective is getting lost in the target oriented approach.

6. Rural development programmes are not able to sustain against unscrupulous elements and vested interest.

7. Culture of silence and non-performance is a major hurdle in success of a program.

8. Many of the physical constructions are not technically sound and not even in accordance with the proposed one.

9. Unfavorable socio-political climate

10. Weak enforcement machinery

11. Under financing, Delay in disbursement

12. Corruption and malpractices

13. Delays

14. Overlapping

15. Leakages
V - Program Specific Issues:

PMSGY:

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said corruption in the country’s road construction projects has “spread like cancer” and lack of quality assurance was costing the nation crores. But he pledged Rs 48,000 crore for a four-year project ending in 2009 to connect 66,000 villages to boost farm growth.

A random inspection of road works under PMGSY ordered by the Ministry of Rural Development and carried out by the independent national quality monitors during July 2004 and September 2006 found substantial number of works under the scheme of “unsatisfactory quality” in several states.

Table No – 5.1 Potholes in Growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>% of Completed works of Unsatisfactory quality</th>
<th>% of ongoing works of unsatisfactory quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Rural Development

The Vision 2025 document estimates a loss of rural roads assets worth about Rs 10,000 crore every year, or equivalent of 40000 km roads being eroded, for want of proper maintenance. ¹

¹ PM hits out at corruption in rural road projects, ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU, Posted online: Thursday, May 24, 2007
The Raichur Zilla Panchayat, an implementing agency for NREGS, has been facing fund crunch in clearing the pending payment of wages to the beneficiaries under the scheme. Lack of coordination between the implementing officials at taluk and gram panchayat and the Chief Executive Officer of the zilla panchayat in utilising the funds and submission accounts is said to be the reason for the failure of the scheme.

**NREGA:**

NREGA scheme had been implementing in the district since 2006-07 for which it so far spent about Rs. 27 crore. But there are complaints that the implementing officials concerned, the executive officers at all the taluk panchayats in the district, have indulged in malpractices in the implementation of the scheme. Even, they failed to maintain proper accounts on the utilisation of funds released to them and also in the submission of utilisation certificate to the zilla panchayat. Instead, they all submitted proposals to the zilla panchayat for release of additional funds for clearing pending payment of wages to the beneficiaries under the scheme pending bills of other expenditure.

In a letter to the Director of the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Anees Siraj, Chief Executive Officer of the Raichur Zilla Panchayat, said the lapses found in the implementation of the scheme had affected the interest of the beneficiaries. The failure of the implementing officials in providing jobs to the needy had forced the beneficiaries to demand for payment of unemployment allowance.²

IAY:

Myriad forms of corruption creep in Indira Awas Yojana:

- Unscrupulous relatives, Sarpanch and Panchayat Secretary collude to manipulate the list of beneficiary candidates.
- Favouring persons other than more needy candidates after taking bribe.
- Other forms of malpractice indulged in by gram-panchayat secretaries:
  1. Short payment (often by two-thirds) to beneficiaries
  2. Payment in kind, the GP secretary acting as middleman / contractor.
  3. Supply of substandard construction material.
  4. Re-sell of IAY-house to otherwise a genuine beneficiary.

Bottlenecks of Rajiv Gandhi Jal Mission (RGJM):

1. there are points of conflicts for selection of site of operation (check dams)
2. group activity often goes by the whims of village leaders
3. Among villagers, it often leads to ego clashes.
4. at times Procedural delays, particularly for the payment of completed works and committee meetings cause frustration and disaffection among villagers.

Under Rashtriya Bridhawastha Pension (RBP) several bottlenecks have been observed are:

1. Inappropriate BPL selection criteria;
2. Ceiling on the number of RBP beneficiaries;
3. Lengthy and time-consuming procedures; and
4. Undue favour to persons other than the needy and deserving candidates, perhaps on account of illegal gratification.

**Bottlenecks in Rashtriya Parivar Sahayata Yojana (RPSY):**

1. Objectives of the scheme either not understood or not sufficiently appreciated by the village community.
2. Fund mis-utilization for *mrityubhoj*
3. Bribe at the time of sanction or release of grant.
4. Delays or denial of RPSY in case of a woman headed house or in case concerned officials are not placated.

**Apparent Bottlenecks of Swaran Jayanti Swarojgar Yojana (SJSY):**

1. For Project preparation under the scheme, approval and implementation ‘*swarojgaris*’ heavily depend on block and district officials.
2. Chances of delay and corruption are larger as several departments are simultaneously involved.³

**Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) suffered from several defects including:**

- sub-critical investment
- unviable projects
- illiterate and unskilled beneficiaries with no experience in managing an enterprise
- indifferent delivery of credit by banks
- overcrowding of lending in certain projects such as dairy

³ [http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/sereport/ser/seopard/sdexsum1.htm#int](http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/sereport/ser/seopard/sdexsum1.htm#int)
• underemphasis on activities like trading, service and even simple processing
• poor targeting and selection of non-poor
• rising indebtedness, and
• scale of IRDP outstripped capacity of government and banks.

Jawahar Rozgar Yojana JRY suffered from the following defects:

• Provided inadequate employment (only 11 days as per concurrent evaluation).
• Resources were spread too thin.
• Violation of material-labour norms and corruption (fudging of muster rolls).
• Projects were executed by contractors who sometimes hired outside labourers at lower wages. 4

VI – Concluding Note:

The first portion of this study ends with this chapter as this chapter is gist of chapter II, III and chapter – IV, these chapters dealt with the whole scenario of rural development. In this chapter the emerging issues of rural development are identified with the help of studies in earlier chapters and described in this chapter. The issues are classified in several broad categories like a) Policy and Planning Level Issues, b) Management Related Issues, c) Implementation Level Issues and d) Program specific issues. Since the basic purpose of the study is to assess the role of RTI in resolving the problems of rural development governance this chapter is very important in the sense that it provides the basis of analysis and direction to carry the study further. As the further study is based on assessing the role RTI is playing in resolving the issues identified in this chapter.

4 http://www.empowerpoor.com/backgrounder.asp?report=5#top
Thus from the above description it can be understood that the rural development suffers from number of such issues and problems. These issues with various dimensions are complex. The study is aimed at assessing the potentials of RTI in resolving these issues hence the attempt has been made in later chapters to assess the RTI from the angle of solving these issues.